

COUNCIL RESCHEDULES REVIEW OF CHARTER HALIBUT DISCUSSION PAPERS FROM OCTOBER 2006 TO DECEMBER 2006 MEETING

In August 2006, the Council rescheduled its review of discussion papers related to management of the charter halibut fisheries to December 2006. This timeline will provide an opportunity for the Charter Halibut Stakeholder Committee to review and comment on these papers prior to Council review.

One discussion paper will present an implementation plan for the Council's April 2006 preferred alternative to implement a 5-halibut annual limit in Area 2C (Southeast Alaska) to reduce charter halibut harvest to below the guideline harvest level of 1.432 Mlb (net weight). Because the Alaska State Constitution does not allow sharing of logbook data with Federal agencies for the purposes of law enforcement, NOAA Fisheries would require a Federal charter vessel halibut angler permit and a charter vessel halibut logbook to implement the annual limit, unless the Halibut Act or State data sharing policies are changed. A second paper will review possible Halibut Act amendment text that would the Council to defer management of halibut to the State.

In June 2006, the Council adopted a moratorium (limited entry) program for the charter halibut fisheries in Areas 2C and 3A, including three options for issuing these permits to community residents. In a detailed review of the Council's alternatives, staff has proposed numerous technical corrections to the language of the alternatives. And after reviewing preliminary data with ADF&G staff, staff will request that the Council clarify major decision points based on data constraints, which are necessary before the analysis can be conducted. These issues would be the subject of a third paper.

The fourth paper is intended to assist the Council in narrowing options for analysis of a permanent solution for the charter halibut fisheries (either a direct allocation or a quota share system). Six issues listed below will be included in the discussion. Further, staff made numerous technical corrections to the language of the alternatives, for Council consideration in December.

1. Availability and quality of charter halibut data;
2. A charter sector allocation in percentage v. pounds, with four proposed percentages and two proposed poundages, with options to increase/decrease if a threshold is reached (stair-step);
3. Subarea allocations within Area 2C and 3A v. local area management plans (awaiting details from ADF&G staff);
4. Six proposed mechanisms for financing any allocation that exceeds the current guideline harvest level;
5. Four proposed permit class programs (plus suboptions), some of which contain aspects of share based systems.
6. Three options for issuing limited entry permits to community residents and timeline for implementation.

The October Charter Halibut Stakeholder Committee will meet for two days in Anchorage in October 2006. The agenda will include the following items. These same items, and Committee recommendations, will be on the December 2006 Council meeting agenda. Check the website's "Halibut" page for more information as it becomes available or contact Jane DiCosimo at the Council office.

1. Review 2005 charter halibut harvests and status of the GHL from Statewide Harvest Survey and pending legislation with State Legislature and Congress (State of Alaska)
2. Status of pending legislation with State Legislature and potential policy changes on data sharing agreements (State of Alaska)
3. Review discussion paper on possible Halibut Act amendment text to defer management to the State (NOAA Fisheries)
4. Review implementation plan for 5-halibut annual limit in Area 2C and NOAA Fisheries request to reconsider its June 2006 preferred alternative (NOAA Fisheries)
5. Review moratorium discussion paper (Council)
6. Review permanent solution discussion paper (Council)
7. Charter Halibut Stakeholder Committee Report (Council)